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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

NIC 3351-83

6 May 1983

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller
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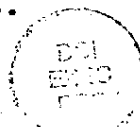
SUBJECT: US Vulnerability in Lebanon

1. In reviewing the tragedy of our Beirut embassy bombing incident, it is astonishing to me that we have not in fact had more attacks on the US presence -- especially our MNF presence -- in Lebanon. I am concerned that these forces are highly vulnerable to attack and are a key target for any elements seeking to spoil the US peace process efforts. Attacks on them may increase and could be highly effective in weakening Congressional and public resolve to stay there.

2. US participation in the MNF is central to US efforts to get Israel out of Lebanon and to extending the writ of the central government. Elements arrayed against this US effort include:

- Iran, which is dedicated to a broad struggle against US interests in the Middle East;
- Syria, which wants Israel to withdraw, but not at the cost of allowing Lebanon to normalize its relations with Syria in another "Camp David step."
- Palestinian extremists who are unhappy with US policies in the Middle East.
- Maronite Christian extremists, who see the establishment of Lebanese central government authority even under Amin to be at the expense of total Maronite dominance of the state;
- Left-wing Muslim political elements which share Syria's concern that Lebanon not capitulate to Israel;
- Pro-Soviet communist groups, which oppose all US initiatives.

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3. All of these groups have reasons to take pot shots at US Marines, in recognition that one death a week over a sustained period will probably spark US public and congressional concern to withdraw them. Any such attacks support Israeli arguments that the MNF is not a viable substitute for a weak central Lebanese government and that only a major Israeli security presence in Lebanon will deter attacks against Israel from Lebanese soil.

4. I would expect further attacks against these forces in the months ahead as a political move by any of a variety of the spoiling elements listed above. Successful conclusion of Lebanese-Israeli withdrawal talks will not necessarily diminish this threat and could even increase it.

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 Graham E. Fuller

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